(c) The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to resume the Tuticorin-Colombo passenger ferry service was examined in a series of inter-ministerial meetings at which representatives of the Government of Tamil Nadu also participated. It received Cabinet approval on June 5th 2003. However, the signing of the MoU has been deferred taking into account the views expressed by the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu.

Jobs for America Act

2436. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY:
SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that US have introduced the jobs for America Act;

(b) if so, the salient features thereof; and

(c) to what extent it would help/affect the Indian IT professionals who desire to go to USA?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a).Yes, Sir. A bill titled "Jobs for America Act of 2004" was introduced in the US Senate on 12 February, 2004 by Senator Thomas Daschle. The bill is still under consideration of the US Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labour and Pensions.

(b) The bill proposes to amend the US Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act, which seeks to provide notice about plant closing, mass lay off etc. The amendments seek, *inter alia,* to:

(j) extend the scope of application of WARN Act to include off shoring of jobs[1] apart from plant closing or mass lay off;

(ii) extend the period of the notice to be given from 60 days to 90 days;

(iii) stipulate preparation of annual reports on off-shoring of jobs by Secretary of Labour. The report should include information regarding number of jobs affected due to off shoring, the location to which these jobs are transferred or shifted, the reasons for such shifting or transfer etc.

(c) The Bill does not have any provision restricting or affecting entry of IT professionals into the US including from India.

Official level talks between India and Pakistan

2437. SHRI MOOLCHAND MEENA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and Pakistan have agreed to hold official level talks in the month of August, 2004;

(b) if so, main points that have been discussed so far;

(c) whether many of the problems have been solved;

(d) if so, what are the issues still outstanding; and

(e) by when, final decision is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) to (e) Bilateral discussions on a number of subjects have been held between India and Pakistan within the framework of the Composite Dialogue. President Musharraf s reassurance in the Joint Press Statement of January 6,2004, not to permit any territory under Pakistan's control to be used to support terrorism in any manner, allowed the process of the Composite Dialogue to be initiated in February 2004. An agreed schedule of meetings was worked out during the Foreign Secretary level talks between India and Pakistan on 18 February, 2004. Accordingly, meetings were held between the border security forces (March 24—27, 2004), and the drug control authorities (June 15-16, 2004) of the two countries, and issues related to drug trafficking and smuggling of contraband, border management, illegal border crossing, and repair and maintenance of border pillars, were, *inter alia,* discussed. Expert Level talks on Nuclear Confidence Building Measures were held in New Delhi on June 19-20, 2004. The two sides agreed to improve communication links between the two DGMOs, establish a hotline between Foreign Secretaries and to work towards MoU on pre-notification of flight testing of missiles. The Foreign Secretaries of the two countries met in New Delhi on June 27-28, 2004 and discussed "Peace and Security including CBMs" and "Jammu and Kashmir", within the framework of the Composite Dialogue. The two sides proposed a comprehensive framework for CBMs aimed at initiating and